

REMARKS:

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 3, 4, 6, 9, 12-18 and 20 were rejected. Claims 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, and 20 are amended, and new claim 21 has been added. Claims 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 19 remain cancelled. Thus, claims 3, 4, 6, 9, 12-18, 20 and 21 are pending and under consideration. No new matter has been added. The outstanding rejections are traversed below.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a):

Claims 3, 4, 6, 9, 12-18 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over various combinations of the following: U.S. Patent No. 5,732,326 (Maruyama), U.S. Patent No. 6,060,995 (Wicks), U.S. Patent No. 6,091,956 (Hollenberg), U.S. Patent No. 6,148,176 (Kolev) and U.S. Patent No. 6,292,672 (Chavez).

Maruyama provides information about exhibits to visitors of a museum, etc., using radio signals transmitted from portable terminal units within the museum (see, col. 5, lines 5-30 and col. 6, lines 59-67). However, Maruyama is limited to transmitting predetermined exhibit information in accordance with a detected position of a user within a particular location (see, col. 9, lines 8-30).

Wicks compares a profile of each subscriber with stored nightlife information to identify the type of information each subscriber is interested in receiving, and transmits information matching the interest profile and location of each subscriber to the subscriber's pager (see, abstract, col. 2, 20-27 and FIG. 2). For example, a message will be transmitted to a subscriber based on the subscriber's profile related to an event or a location (see, FIG. 2 and corresponding text).

Hollenberg is directed to providing services and time-critical information, such as, using a bar-code reader at a wildlife preserve to search and receive additional information about plants, environments, etc., (see, col. 6, lines 60-64 and FIG. 13), and Kolev is directed to acquiring service for a user terminal from a satellite communications system by defining spot beams that provide service for a different geographic reason (see, col. 3, lines 49-62 and col. 4, lines 40-52).

In contrast, the present invention is directed to enabling an interactive communication between users based on sensed information that is commonly shared by the users. For example, a user is enabled to actively communicate with other users located at an event site

based on sensed identification information of the user terminal (i.e., with users that share a common interest with the user).

As recited in amended independent claims 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13 and 20, the present invention provides “a communication channel enabling an interactive communication between users in a limited space of the real world” when the users have “sensed information that is shared in the real world” in accordance with sensing of “identification information of a communication channel”. Accordingly, the present invention allows an interactive communication between users based on “sensed information that is commonly shared by the users in the real world”.

The cited references, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest enabling “an interactive communication using a virtual communication space between users in a limited space based on sensed information” that is commonly shared by the users in the real world, as recited in each of the independent claims 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13 and 20.

Accordingly, it is submitted that each of the independent claims 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13 and 20 are patentable over the cited references.

For at least the above-mentioned reasons, claims depending from independent claims 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13 and 20 are patentably distinguishable over the cited references. The dependent claims are also independently patentable. For example, as recited in claim 16, the present invention provides “user-sent information by providing all user-sent information that has been accumulated as history of a predetermined period of time prior to login to user terminals that have newly logged into the communication channel, and thereafter immediately exchanging user-sent information among user terminals that are logged in as chat”. The cited references, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest a virtual communication space corresponding to sensed information that provides “all user-sent information that has been accumulated as history of a predetermined period of time prior to login to user terminals that have newly logged into the communication channel, and thereafter immediately exchanging user-sent information among user terminals that are logged in as chat”, as recited in dependent claim 16.

Further, at page 33 of the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner combines Maruyama, Wicks and Kolev with Chavez to reject dependent claim 14. However, Chavez is limited to transmitting messages to other wireless terminals to inform the wireless terminals when a wireless terminal leaves a particular location (see, col. 1, lines 55-60).

Dependent claim 14 recites a system enabling a virtual communication space, where “the

user terminal logs out of the communication channel to which it is logged in by retiring from the virtual communication space or by logging into a communication channel that is assigned to another virtual communication space". The cited references, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest a virtual communication space corresponding to sensed information, where "the user terminal logs out of the communication channel to which it is logged in by retiring from the virtual communication space or by logging into a communication channel that is assigned to another virtual communication space", as recited in dependent claim 14.

Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

NEW CLAIM:

New claim 21 is added to recite that the present invention includes, "sensing identification information of a terminal used by a user to identify a communication channel assigned to the virtual communication space" and "enabling the user to exchange information and actively communicate with other users that share a common interest via the virtual communication space using the identified communication channel".

Applicants respectfully submit that new claim 21 is patentably distinguishable over the cited references.

CONCLUSION:

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

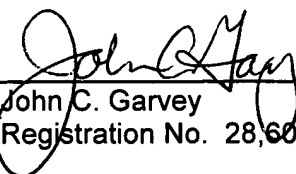
If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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